



Office of the Bishop

Stage 3 Re-Opening Guidelines for Parishes

2 July 2021

Dear Pastors, Assoc. Pastors, and Parishioners,

Greetings in the Lord!

As of yesterday, the Provincial Government has moved to Stage 3 of its BC Restart Plan and removed the Public Health Restrictions on religious worship services. This is very good news and long awaited by everyone. With this change, it is now incumbent on us for our own health and safety as we transition to this new/old reality.

In order to allow our clergy and parishioners to adapt to the changes, I feel it is best to take an incremental approach as we return to our usual Faith practices in our parishes. Also, allowing time for the vaccination rate to increase, will help to further protect and ensure the safety of our clergy and parishioners. Therefore, following the recommendations of Public Health:

Generally

- Please stay home if you are sick, and get tested
- Please respect one another's personal space and allow for that personal space even if it is different than yours
- Masks can be worn by anyone at anytime depending on their comfort level
- In order to protect themselves and others, **"Masks are recommended in public indoor settings for all people 12 years and older who are not yet fully vaccinated."**
- Please make hand sanitizer available for parishioners as they enter and exit the church
- Please consider continuing disinfecting and sanitizing protocols of surfaces and pews
- Registration for contact tracing is no longer necessary
- Please continue to use plexiglass barriers if you have them
- Please leave Holy Water Fonts empty for now. Consider having a touchless dispenser at the entrance/exit of the church
- Ensure good fresh air circulation and ventilation
- Vaccinations are the surest way of protecting oneself and others, and they are encouraged

Mass

- Those in ministries that involve direct contact with people, such as Eucharistic Ministers, Greeters, Ushers, Children's Liturgy, Hospitality (food or drink), or Visits to the Sick and Homebound must wear a mask and follow hand sanitizing protocols unless they are fully vaccinated
- Clergy who are not fully vaccinated must wear a mask during Mass, and continue to follow the protocols such as covering the Eucharistic bread used for the parishioners, intinction if one is concelebrating, etc.
- Holy Communion will continue under one species, the Body of Christ
- Ministers of Holy Communion are to sanitize your hands before and after giving Holy Communion
- Holy Communion on the Tongue is reinstated: please receive Holy Communion after everyone has received. The Priest should sanitize his fingers between each communicant with hand sanitizer, and after the distribution of Holy Communion, before cleaning any Mass vessels
- Please make Holy Communion available for those unable to attend an indoor Mass as well as FM Broadcast if available
- Sign of Peace: use a gesture other than a handshake with those not of the same household
- Collection: please consider having the Ushers take up the collection instead of passing a basket around
- Music Ministry: all Mass parts can be sung; congregational singing is allowed; hymnals and missals can be used
- Live-Stream Masses: it will be up to the parish to decide whether to continue or change the schedule for live-stream Masses
- Sunday Mass & Holy Days of Obligation: until everyone has had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated, the dispensation will remain in effect. Nonetheless, everyone is encouraged to return to in-person celebrations of the Eucharist as soon as possible
- Parish Offices: can be open to the public. Social distancing, hand sanitizing, masks protocols should be maintained for the time being

Other organized gatherings:

- Indoor gatherings, weddings, ceremonies, events: 50 people or up to 50% capacity, whichever is greater; hand sanitizing supplies readily available to participants; once seated, remain seated unless getting food/beverage, or going to the washroom; no standing or mingling
- Hospitality after Mass: 50 people or up to 50% capacity, whichever is greater; provide a sign saying to sanitize hands before touching self-serve food or drink, or consider having one person serve food/drink; high touch surfaces are frequently cleaned and sanitized; once seated, remain seated unless getting food/beverage or going to the washroom; no standing or mingling
- Outdoor: 5,000 people or up to 50% capacity, whichever is greater

If you have further questions, please check the Provincial Governments Restart Plan and the Public Health Orders for further guidance.

Thank you for your diligence and patience as we adjust to these changes. God bless you.

Sincerely in Christ our Lord,



✠ Gregory J Bittman
Bishop of Nelson